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The Revised U.S. Grade Standards for Potatoes

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THE REVISED U.S. GRADE STANDARDS FOR POTATOES

Revised U.S. standards for grades of potatoes, effective Sept. 1, 1971, require potatoes marketed under the U.S. grades to be cleaner and have fewer defects than do the standards in effect since 1958. They also provide additional size designations. This publication discusses the principal changes in the standards and how and why grade standards and official inspection are used.

WHY HAVE U.S. GRADE STANDARDS FOR POTATOES?

U.S. grade standards for potatoes, together with the official inspection service provided to certify grades, aid in the orderly marketing of potatoes and contribute to efficiency in buying and selling.

The standards provide a means of measuring quality in potatoes and a common language for buyers and sellers. They are used as the basis for market news prices. They help settle disputes between buyers and sellers as to the quality of potatoes being traded. The grade standards also provide a basis for quality control in packing-houses and help growers, packers, and shippers obtain proper financial returns for the quality of potatoes they offer for sale.

The ultimate purpose of U.S. grade standards for potatoes, of course, is to help the potato industry bring a product of good quality to the final buyer—the consumer.

IS USE OF THE GRADE STANDARDS MANDATORY?

No. Use of the grade standards or the Federal or Federal-State Inspection Service to certify the quality of potatoes is voluntary, except where required by State law or under terms of Federal or State marketing orders. Inspection is provided on a fee-for-service basis.

WHY ARE CHANGES OR REVISIONS MADE IN THE GRADE STANDARDS?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture proposes changes in the grade standards on request of members of the potato industry, consumers, State Departments of Agriculture, and others.

USDA standardization specialists also propose changes based on their study of production and marketing practices and the capabilities of packing and marketing methods to deliver potatoes of specified quality to consumers.

HOW WAS THE REVISION OF THE GRADE STANDARDS DEVELOPED?

Members of the potato industry have recommended changes to improve the standards, so that they would serve the industry better, since the last revision of the standards in 1958. USDA also has received many letters from consumers stating their dissatisfaction with small and irregularly sized potatoes and the high proportion of potatoes with cuts, bruises, and internal discoloration. Consumers also complained about dirty potatoes and the use of artificial color on red-skinned potatoes.

Based largely on recommendations of the National Potato Council, USDA published a proposed revision of the grade standards for potatoes in October 1969. Members of the potato industry, consumers, and others interested were given until May 1, 1970 to submit comments on the proposal. A total of about 650 letters of comment were received. About 45 percent of these were from consumers, and 55 percent from members of the potato industry.

Taking into consideration comments received, the proposed revision was modified and published on December 1, 1970 in final form. In order to give all those affected ample time to prepare for use of the revised grade standards, they were not made effective until September 1, 1971.

WILL IT BE DIFFICULT TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE REVISED STANDARDS?

The changes made in the standards are not far-reaching. Some packers are already packing well above the minimum requirements of the new U.S. No. 1 grade. The great majority will have no difficulty in meeting U.S. No. 1. Some packers may have to take greater care in cleaning potatoes and in sorting them for defects. The new size designations will aid those packing for uniformity of size. In the new standards, size is determined either by diameter or weight, so that a mixture of shapes—long or blocky—in the same container can be sized by either method.

Principal Changes in the U.S. Grade Standards for Potatoes

Standards in effect since 1958

Revised standards effective Sept. 1, 1971

Cleanliness

U.S. No. 1 potatoes must be "free from damage by dirt." Individual potatoes which are more than slightly dirty are not allowed.

U.S. No. 1 potatoes must be "fairly clean": 90 percent or more of the potatoes in a lot must be reasonably free from dirt or staining.

This does not mean that the potatoes have to be washed. In most producing areas, normal brushing will remove excess dirt.

Defects

Total tolerance for defects in U.S. No. 1 grade is 11 percent, including not more than 6 percent for external defects or 5 percent for internal defects. Defects include decay, internal discoloration, hollow heart, and any other damage or injury causing loss of more than 5 percent of the potato.

(1) Moderately shriveled, spongy, or flabby potatoes meet U.S. No. 1 requirements.

(2) Artificial coloring: no reference made.

(3) Sprouts: Any number of sprouts up to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long is permitted. Not over 10 percent of potatoes in any lot may have sprouts over $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long in the U.S. No. 1 grade.

Total tolerance for defects in U.S. No. 1 is 8 percent, including no more than 5 percent external defects or 5 percent internal defects. Defects are the same **except**:

(1) Moderately shriveled, spongy or flabby potatoes no longer meet U.S. No. 1 requirements. Potatoes may not show more than slight shriveling.

(2) Artificial coloring which is unsightly, which conceals any other defect that causes damage, or which causes more than 5 percent waste when discolored flesh is removed, is included in scoring external defects of U.S. No. 1 grade.

(3) Sprouts or clusters of sprouts which materially detract from the appearance of the potato are included with sprouts over $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long in scoring against the U.S. No. 1 grade and not over 10 percent are permitted in any lot.

Grade Nomenclature

Top grade is U.S. Fancy. Most potatoes are marketed on the basis of the U.S. No. 1 grade.

Top grade is U.S. Extra No. 1. This premium grade is similar to the former U.S. Fancy grade. Most of the crop will continue to be packed to meet the U.S. No. 1 grade.

Size

1958:

Minimum size of U.S. No. 1 is $1\frac{7}{8}$ inches diameter; no maximum. Optional sizing by count of potatoes in 50 lb. cartons provided.



Size Range

1971:

Same, except that minimum and maximum weight specifications are used instead of actual count for potatoes packed to customary count sizes in 50 lb. cartons. These size designations (80, 90, 100, etc.) are now applicable to any type or size of container. Optional size designations are also provided as follows:

	Minimum	Maximum
Small	$1\frac{3}{4}$ inches	$2\frac{1}{2}$ inches or 6 ounces
Medium	$2\frac{1}{4}$ inches or 5 ounces	$3\frac{1}{4}$ inches or 10 ounces
Large	3 inches or 10 ounces	$4\frac{1}{4}$ inches or 16 ounces

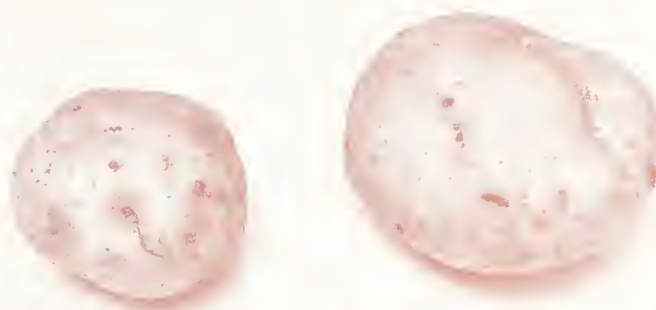
Range Under Optional Sizing Small



Medium



Large





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OFFICIAL INSPECTION

Official, impartial, third-party inspection of potatoes is offered to shippers throughout the country by the Federal-State Inspection Service, operated jointly by USDA's Consumer and Marketing Service and cooperating State agencies. Shipping point inspection establishes what the quality is at time of shipment, for sales purposes or for verifying compliance with contract terms. Some packers find inspection valuable as a quality control tool.

Receivers in destination markets throughout the country also can obtain inspection, offered by USDA's Federal or Federal-State Inspection Services. This inspection is used to determine whether a shipment meets contract terms on arrival, to help decide the best use for a particular shipment, as an aid in selling or in the settlement of a controversy.



To obtain copies of the standards and the address or phone number of the Federal or Federal-State Inspection office nearest you, write or call:

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Inspection
Fruit and Vegetable Division, C&MS
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250
Telephone: 202-388-5870

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